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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, November 19, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE CONSUMER FACTS FOR THANKSGIVING." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of Home Economics in the Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

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Last Thursday our Washington bulletin to consumers on Thanksgiving foods told about the supplies of holiday birds, and gave us some tips about deciding which bird to buy. This week we have some more tips to consumers on the other possibilities for the Thanksgiving menu.

To team up with the meat course, cranberries come next on the Thanksgiving "must" list. Cranberries always hit their year's high for supply in November. This year about 530,000 barrels will probably go to market. That's a little larger than last year's crop but 50,000 barrels below average. Judging by the wholesale price of cranberries during late October, which was $1 per barrel higher than last year at the same time, we may have to spend on cranberries a cent or two of the money we save this year on poultry.

Shopping for quality in cranberries is not very hard because the growers' cooperatives in New England that market most of the cranberries make sure by strict grading that cranberry quality standards are kept high. The experts in the Department of Agriculture say that high quality cranberries are firm, plump, fresh looking, with a high shine. They tell consumers to look out for the dull, soft ones, or those that are shriveled. If they look wet, try to find out whether this is because they have just been taken out of cold storage. That kind of dampness does not indicate poor quality and soon disappears. But moisture caused by injury or damage may mean cranberries that are tough, leathery, and sticky, with discolored flesh. But as to color and size, those are things that depend more on the variety of the cranberry than its quality. Of the common varieties, the small dark red ones are a bit sweeter than the large bright red kinds.

The main vitamin contribution cranberries make to the diet is in Vitamin C. Cooking tends to destroy this vitamin, so that fact adds extra attraction to recipes that use cranberries raw. Another caution goes with this, though, and that is not to let cranberries stand long uncovered if you have chopped them up, as exposure to air is bad for Vitamin C, too.

The next "must" on the Thanksgiving list is celery, and the Government forecasters give us good news on that item. They promise us plentiful supplies and correspondingly lower prices.

Celery's chief claim to glory is in "appetite appeal", since it is not one of the most striking contributors of vitamins. It ranks only as "fair" as a source of Vitamins B and C, along with its rating as "good" for calcium. To make sure of getting the kind of celery you want, look for crispness. Besides that, it should be medium in length, thickness, and solidity. If, in addition, the stalks are brittle enough to snap easily you can expect to find a good well-developed heart. Look out for pithy, stringy, open-textured celery with air spaces in the middle. Check for blackheart and for insect injury by separating the branches and studying the heart.

As to the other vegetables that we choose from for our Thanksgiving dinner, they're not, on the whole, far off from last year in price and supply. Parsnips will be a little more expensive. Brussels sprouts about the same, Hubbard squash slightly lower, and turnips -- like celery -- decidedly below last year in price. Pumpkins which of course can't be called strictly a vegetable, even if squash does sometimes alternate with pumpkin in the pie position, can't be the subject of such accurate predictions. They may be a little higher in price this year, but much depends on the local market and the demand at the time. Of course we know that both white potatoes and sweet potatoes are short in supply this year and prices are up.

More Brussels sprouts and turnips come to market in November than in any other month of the year, which means it is the most favorable month to buy them and puts them on a preferred list for Thanksgiving. Brussels sprouts rank as "good" for Vitamin A and "excellent" for Vitamin C, along with slight contributions of other vitamins and iron, and a good supply of phosphorus. The experts say to look for those that are hard, firm, compact, fresh and with a good bright green complexion. If they are puffy, they can still be eaten, but will not taste so good nor look so fine on the dinner table. If they have yellowed leaves and a general wilted look they're likely to be older than their prime. Worms are a sign of a lot of waste, but you can easily tell whether that waste is likely by looking for the damage on the leaves. It's harder to check on plant lice, but the experts say it's wise to look closely on the inner surfaces of the leaves to be sure they're free from plant lice, and so fit for food.

Turnips rank as "excellent" for Vitamin C, and are a fair source of Vitamin C. The best turnips, according to the quality specialists in the Department of Agriculture, are the ones that are smooth, firm, with few leaf scars around the crown, and with very few fibrous roots at the base. The tops, which the nutrition specialists rate higher than the roots on several counts, point to quality in the turnip as a whole. The turnip tops should be fresh, green, young, and up-and-coming. If they are yellowed or wilted they may have been damaged or kept too long. If the turnips are soft or shriveled they may be tough when you cook them. Another thing to do is to lift the turnip and make sure it's good and heavy for its size.

Fruit supplies are likely to be short this year, taken all together. The average was pulled way down by the deep cut in the apple crop. The grape crop will not be so hard hit as apples but it will not match last year's or the average per capita supply for the last few years. Raisins, naturally, will suffer along with fresh grapes, and prices of both raisins and grapes will be higher than last year. But we're due to have the biggest production of citrus fruit the country has ever seen, so the Thanksgiving fruit basket need not go short of oranges and grapefruit.

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